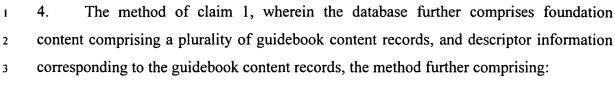WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of providing personalized information comprising:

    a)   providing a database comprising a plurality of contributor content records and a plurality of contributor profile records, wherein each contributor content record corresponds to a contributor profile record; and wherein the database further comprises descriptor information corresponding to the contributor content records;

    b)   obtaining a user profile record;

    c)   obtaining a user search query;

    d)   comparing the user search query with at least a portion of the descriptor information;

    e)   comparing at least a portion of the user profile record with at least two contributor profile records;

    f)   providing personalized information comprising contributor content records based upon the results of the comparisons in (d) and (e) above.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising using information submitted by a contributor to increase the number of contributor content records in the database, and providing valuable consideration to the contributor in exchange for the submitted information.
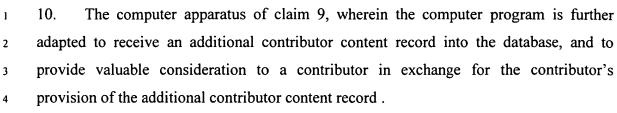
3. The method of claim 2, further comprising varying the valuable consideration provided to the contributor, based on the quality of the contributor's contributor content records, wherein such quality is assessed by at least one user.

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4. The method of claim 1, wherein the database further comprises foundation content comprising a plurality of guidebook content records, and descriptor information corresponding to the guidebook content records, the method further comprising:

    a) comparing the user search query and at least a portion of the user profile record with at least a portion of the descriptor information corresponding to a guidebook content record, and

    b) providing additional personalized information comprising guidebook content records based upon the results of the comparison in (a) above.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the database further comprises travel provider content comprising a plurality of travel provider content records, and descriptor information corresponding to the travel provider content records, the method further comprising:

    a) comparing the user search query and at least a portion of the user profile record with at least a portion of the descriptor information corresponding to each travel provider content record, and

    b) providing additional personalized information comprising travel provider content records based upon the results of the comparison in (a) above.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the user profile record and the contributor profile records each comprise a plurality of corresponding data elements.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the plurality of corresponding data elements comprises personal identification information, travel interests information, travel-related attributes, dining and accommodation preference information, favorite destination information, and aspired destination information.

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1   8.   The method of claim 6, wherein the step of comparing at least a portion of the

2   user profile record with at least two contributor profile records comprises the steps of:

3   a)   comparing a first data element of the user profile record with a

4   corresponding first data element of a first contributor profile record to

5   generate a first comparison score;

6   b)   comparing a second data element of the user profile record with a

7   corresponding second data element of the first contributor profile

8   record to generate a second comparison score;

9   c)   combining the generated comparison scores to calculate a first match

10   rating between the user profile record and the first contributor profile

11   record;

12   d)   repeating steps (a) – (c) using a second contributor profile record to

13   calculate a match rating between the user profile record and the second

14   contributor profile record; and

15   e)   using the calculated match ratings to provide the personalized information.

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17   9.   A computer apparatus for providing personalized information comprising:

18   a)   a database comprising a plurality of contributor content records, each

19   record corresponding to a contributor profile record, and each record

20   corresponding to descriptor information; and

21   b)   a computer program adapted to receive a user profile record and a user

22   search query, the program comprising a content match algorithm

23   adapted to compare at least a portion of the user profile record with at

24   least a portion of at least two contributor profile records, and to

25   compare the user search query with at least a portion of the descriptor

26   information, such that there is generated personalized information

27   comprising contributor content records in response to the user search

28   query.

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10. The computer apparatus of claim 9, wherein the computer program is further adapted to receive an additional contributor content record into the database, and to provide valuable consideration to a contributor in exchange for the contributor's provision of the additional contributor content record .

11. The computer apparatus of claim 10, wherein the database further comprises foundation content including travel guidebook content records, the guidebook content records having corresponding descriptor information, and wherein the content match algorithm is further adapted to compare the user search query and at least a portion of the user profile record with at least a portion of the descriptor information corresponding to a guidebook content record, allowing the computer program generate and provide to a user additional personalized information comprising guidebook content records.

12. The computer apparatus of claim 10, wherein the user profile record includes at least two personal travel data elements related to a user, and wherein each contributor profile record includes at least two corresponding personal travel data elements related to a contributor.

13. The computer apparatus of claim 12, wherein the user personal travel data elements comprise information relating to the user's personal identification information, travel interests information, travel-related attributes, and dining and accommodation preference information; and wherein the contributor personal travel data elements comprise information relating to the contributor's personal identification information, travel interests information, travel-related attributes, and dining and accommodation preference information.

1 14. The computer apparatus of claim 12, wherein the content match algorithm
2 compares at least a portion of the user profile record with at least a portion of a
3 contributor profile record by the steps of:

4   a) comparing a first personal travel data element of the user profile record
5   with a corresponding first personal travel data element of the
6   contributor profile record, and generating a first comparison score;

7   b) comparing a second personal travel data element of the user profile record
8   with a corresponding second personal travel data element of the
9   contributor profile record to generate a second comparison score; and

10   c) combining the generated comparison scores to calculate a match rating
11   between the user profile record and the contributor profile record.

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13 15. The computer apparatus of claim 14, wherein the step of combining each of the
14 generated comparison scores includes multiplying each generated comparison score by a
15 weighting factor to calculate a product, and adding each calculated product together to
16 calculate the match rating.

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18 16. The computer apparatus of claim 14, wherein the personalized information
19 comprises a displayed list of selected contributor content records, and for each content
20 record, an indicator of its relevance corresponding to the its match rating.

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22 17. The computer apparatus of claim 14, wherein the personalized information
23 comprises a displayed list comprising selected contributor content records, the content
24 records displayed in an order relating to their relevance as determined by the match
25 ratings for each displayed content record.

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18. An Internet-based computer system for providing personalized information comprising:

    a)   means for storing contributor records;

    b)   means for receiving a user profile record and a user search query;

    c)   means for comparing the user profile record and the user search query with the contributor records; and

    d)   means for generating personalized information comprising selected contributor content records based upon the user profile record and the user search query.

19. The computer system of claim 18, further comprising a means for receiving additional contributor records, and a means for providing valuable consideration to a contributor in exchange for the additional contributor records.

20. The computer system of claim 19, further comprising means for receiving foundation content; means for comparing the user profile record and the user search query with the foundation content; and means for generating additional personalized information comprising selected foundation content records based upon the user profile record and the user search query.